

Statement in Support of HB 5837 (and HB 5280)

When the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) was created in 1921, its primary responsibility was to implement laws pertaining to the production, handling and distribution of agricultural products. The department was given the mandate to promote agricultural interests in Michigan and foster direct trading or marketing between producers and consumers.

Although some things have remained constant, the 21st century has brought considerable new challenges and opportunities for MDA. The department's job has become larger and more complex, and the technology more advanced.

Today, MDA operates according to much larger goals. In its dual role of regulator and marketer, MDA provides Michigan citizens with quality services and information by working cooperatively with many state, federal and local agencies and other organizations including universities, colleges and associations.

MISSION STATEMENT

"To protect, promote and preserve the food, agricultural, environmental and economic interests of the people of Michigan."

MDA PRIORITIES

1. Protect consumers by ensuring a safe, secure and wholesome food supply.
2. Promote Michigan agricultural products and the expansion of value-added opportunities and agricultural tourism in our state.
3. Preserve farmland and the quality of life in Michigan's rural areas.

If this sound familiar is should as it is taken directly from the MDA website. I personally found this statement of mission and priorities uplifting.

As a Market Mistress for the Frankenmuth Farmers Market and a citizen of Michigan I am joyfully voicing my support for HB 5837 (HB5280) on behalf of the small family farms, farmers market consumers and potential value added producers in the Great Lakes Bay Region of this great state of Michigan. I am requesting that this committee consider the far reaching benefits of this bill.

Here are the reasons I have taken this stand:

- Michigan stands at the crossroad of its future. Every logical opportunity for the future of Michigan's economic revitalization must be considered. This future can begin with individual citizens in our rural communities producing value added products. These products can be marketed directly through farmers markets.
- This grassroots movement will revolutionize communities by awakening the creative and entrepreneurial spirit celebrating the diversity of Michigan's harvests. As we connect the producer to the consumer thus shortening the food chain, ultimately conserving fuel on both side of this exchange we create a local circle economy within that region where everyone as an opportunity to benefit. This bill can do that...you can do this for Michigan.
- This is Pure Michigan and will promote Michigan's Agri-Tourism.
- Also, I know what consumers are asking for at farmers markets. These value added products are what the consumers are searching for.

I have suggestions:

- In order to encourage the production of fresh and locally grown value added products a 'Best Practices' guide will direct the value added producer towards proper handling of products in a home kitchen environment. As a Market Mistress who inspects all my growers and producers I could use that 'Cottage Food Best Practices' manual to facilitate these guidelines. I could be a link between the MDA and the producers to ensure quality products are making it to my market.
- Additionally, some of these small cottage food industries will grow and becoming small business that make up the foundation of Michigan's economic base. Making information available for the transition from a small cottage food operation to a small business will be necessary.

In closing, I wish to reiterate that this Cottage Food Bill will feed the body, mind and soul of the citizens of Michigan. Making quality, fresh, locally grown value added products available will improve the physical health of our citizens, provide a mindful positive move forward and brighten the souls of Michigan residents—reconnecting them to our state and our land. This bill stands to save small family farms, grow communities, connect Michigan back to its agricultural roots, and to stimulate our economy.

Therefore, on this day as the Frankenmuth Farmers Market Mistress I pledge my help to you in facilitating HB 5837 (HB 5280). Our Market is the connection that your vision and mission strive to create. I encourage this committee to gather around this bill and do something great that will move Michigan forward.

As my friend Michael Pollan said, "It's time all sides gathered around a table for a good locally grown meal and to talk.

Respectfully presented by: Lj Safford Kehn, daughter of small Michigan farmer, 11585 King Road, Frankenmuth, Michigan 48734
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